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To: The New Jersey State Department of Education Members

FROM: Cheryl Corbett RN BS CSN

DATE: June 21, 2006

RE: Testimony on Proposed Changes to N.J.A.C. 6A:16.2

Good Afternoon. My name is Cheryl Corbett and I am a Certified School Nurse for the Monroe Township School District in Gloucester County. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the crucial issue of keeping the words "full time equivalent" to the requirement of a certified school nurse per school in the Administrative Code.

I am a specialist in the field of nursing and education. In addition to being a Registered Nurse, I have a Bachelor of Science degree and a certificate in School Nursing from the New Jersey Department of Education. My Professional Development hours are in the subjects of education and nursing.

The American Academy of Pediatrics supports professional preparation for all School Nurses as determined by the National Association of School Nurses. New Jersey is a leader among states which are in compliance with these recommendations. To remove the full-time certified school nurse equivalent from the administrative code is in direct discord with the AAP and a disservice to all school aged children.

I understand that 12 waivers were issued to small schools in NJ who said they were unable to hire CSN's. Why should these schools that have a special needs population lower their standard of health care for the students in the school? I realize an RN could tend to some of the direct medical needs of the students, but a Certified School Nurse comes into the school setting already with an extensive background in medical care, knowledge of educational law and community resources in order to give the most comprehensive care to a student with special needs. The Certified School Nurse has a vast knowledge of school services, collaborating with CST members, and teachers to develop IEP's, IHP's and 504 plans to suit the needs of each individual student so that they may grow and learn in a supportive and least restrictive environment. My concern would be focused on the reasons why these schools are requiring a waiver, and are willing to hire a less qualified member for their educational team. If they believe it is difficult to hire a CSN now, how do they think they will be able to hire one on a part-time basis without the professional benefits awarded to a full time certified school nurse?

With the increasing enrollment of students with complex and chronic health care needs in the school setting, there is no argument to say that CSN's are not prepared or want to deal with the needs of these special students in the small schools. There is no argument to say there is a difficulty recruiting CSN's because of these complex medical needs. We already care for students with seizures, diabetes, feeding tubes, heart conditions, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, asthma, spina bifida, sickle cell anemia and severe allergies, in our public schools. We are up to the challenge everyday of our practice to meet the needs of these students. That is why we have chosen this specialty and have extended our education to become Certified School Nurses.

A student was enrolled in my school that has Sickle Cell Disease. I immediately went into action in order to make her educational experience a positive one where she would be comfortable with who she was and in turn have her ready to learn. As a certified school nurse, I knew that it was important to link her health care providers, parents and teachers in order to develop a comprehensive Health Care plan. I knew that Special Education Laws entitled her to services under chronic health conditions, and that it was important to contact the Child Study Team and initiate an IEP. Working with the CST members, we developed a complete educational plan along with my Individualized Health Care Plan and Emergency Care Plan. I contacted her social worker from Children's Hospital and brought her in to the classroom and presented an educational program about her disease.

As a result, she had many more healthy days in school and has been successful in the classroom.

This is just one example of what a certified school nurse does on a daily basis. There are many other students just like mine that are constantly in need of advocacy that only a full-time certified school nurse can give.

I sit on educational and health committees, counsel students and parents, interact with DYFS, educate the staff on current health topics, teach in the classroom, participate in CST meetings and find teachable moments everyday of the school year. I am a member of the Intervention and Referral Team that evaluates students that are having difficulties in the classroom and offer strategies to families, students and teachers which help increase the success of the student. How could I possibly do all this working on a part time basis?

A certified school nurse is an invaluable member in the educational setting. To cut a full-time certified school from the administrative code is to put every child's health and education in jeopardy. New Jersey is a leader in education, do not take a back seat when it comes to the health and welfare of every single student in New Jersey.

Thank you.

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